DC
BATMAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
490
US $1.25
CAN $1.60
MAR 93
TM
0 70992 30430 1 03

THE SIGNAL'S BEEN FIXED, BUT I'M STILL BROKEN...

GROGGY FROM THE SEDATIVES, HEARTBEAT SLOW, COLD SWEAT FROM THE KNEES DOWN, WEAK AND WEARY... BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER.

THE LIGHT BECKONS.

DARKNESS MUST ANSWER.

BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE.

DOUG MOENCH WRITER & JIM APARO ARTIST

ADRIENNE ROY COLORIST & STARKINGS LETTERER

SCOTT PETERSON ASST. EDITOR & DENNY O'NEIL EDITOR

WHO RIDDLED THE RIDDLER???

BATMAN 490. March, 1993. Published monthly by DC Comics, 1325 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BATMAN, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate $15.00. Canadian subscribers must add $8.00 for postage and GST. GST # is R125921072. All other foreign countries must add $12.00 for postage. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 1992 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. All characters featured in this issue, the distinctive likenesses thereof, and all related indicia are trademarks of DC Comics. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. For advertising space contact: Tom Ballou, (212) 636-5520. Printed on recyclable paper. Printed in Canada. DC Comics. A division of Warner Bros.–A Time Warner Entertainment Company

HaCsA ~ nom scan~

THE BOY IS A WONDER...

THERE IT IS -- THE NEXT ROOF.

AND SHOULD I STILL POSE AS THE BATMAN?

... BUT STILL ALL TOO OFTEN OUT OF HIS DEPTH.

YEAH, I GUESS...

MAYBE IF YOU HANG BACK... AND STICK TO THE SHADOWS... GORDON WON'T --

GORDON WILL KNOW.

BAT-MAN.

YOU MIGHT FOOL OTHERS, BUT NOT HIM.

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP, JEAN PAUL -- I'LL HANDLE IT FROM HERE.

BUT... WHAT DO I DO NOW?

GO HOME.

LUCIUS FOX AND BRUCE WAYNE WILL STILL NEED YOU, BUT FOR NOW...

...THE BATMAN IS BACK.

ALL RIIIGHT!

NOW WHERE THE *DEVIL* COULD HE --

HERE, GORDON.

Eh?

SORRY I'M LATE.

WHAT HAVE YOU *GOT*?

GOT? I'VE GOT *LOTS* OF THINGS...

I'VE GOT A *POUNDING HEAD*, A *SOUR STOMACH*, A *PEEVED WIFE* WHO'S PROBABLY HAVING DINNER *WITHOUT* ME --

-- AND A *LOUSY RIDDLE*.

IT CAME WITH THE USUAL EXTORTION DEMAND.

WHAT CROWNS JUST ONE BUT BEATS A DOZEN? BIM BAM BOOM. SOME PERCUSSION.

"WHAT CROWNS JUST ONE BUT BEATS A DOZEN? BIM BAM BOOM. SOME PERCUSSION." YOU CHECKED THIS --

-- FOR FINGER-PRINTS?

YES -- AND IT'S *HIM*, ALL RIGHT.

WHY WOULD HE TRY TO *HIDE* IT, WHEN THE *RIDDLE ITSELF* IS POSITIVE I.D?

CROWN... DOZEN... PER-CUSSION...

KLATCH

HE *WOULDN'T* TRY TO HIDE IT -- BUT SOMEONE ELSE... *POSING* AS HIM...

GOOD POINT... BUT NO POSING *INVOLVED*.

BULLOCK SAYS THE PRINTS *CHECK OUT* -- AS EDWARD NIGMA, A.K.A THE *RIDDLER*.

AS FOR HIS LATEST *RIDDLE*, HAVE YOU MANAGED TO PUZZLE IT --

EH?

WHY DOES HE ALWAYS DO THAT TO ME?

STUPID SYSTEM, THAT *BAT-BEACON*. ANYONE WITH *ANY* KNOWLEDGE OF ELECTRONICS CAN EAVESDROP ON THEM AND --

THERE *IS* SOMETHING WRONG WITH HIM.

HE MOVED *DIFFERENTLY*... SLOWER... ALMOST IN *PAIN*...

THE *BATMAN*? HE SEEMED TO MOVE FINE TO *ME*, BANE.

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE *BLIND*, BIRD -- YOU SEE ONLY THE *SURFACE*.

AND WHATEVER *IS* WRONG WITH HIM, IT'S THE REASON HE FAILED TO CONFRONT *KILLER CROC*.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THIS *NEW* CRIMINAL? THIS *"RIDDLER"*?

MAYBE A TOUGHER OPPONENT, BANE, NOT *PHYSICALLY*, LIKE CROC, BUT --

KILLER CROC WAS *NOTHING*, AND THIS RIDDLER--A FOOL WHO PLAYS *PUZZLE GAMES* WITH THE BATMAN FOR *FUN*--IS EVEN *LESS*...

AT LEAST IT'S A CHANCE TO ASSESS THE BATMAN'S *MIND*. BANE, OBSERVE HOW HE *THINKS*, DEDUCES *CLUES* AND --

... UNLESS WE *MAKE* SOMETHING OF THE FOOL-- MAKE THE RIDDLER A FORCE TO BE *RECKONED WITH*.

WHAT YOU GOT IN *MIND*, BANE?

YOUR *VENOM*, ZOMBIE... PUT TO A *NEW USE*...

I'M GOING TO SOLVE THE RIDDLE *FIRST*...

TEK

...AND WHEN I *FIND* THIS RIDDLER, I'M GOING TO...

VSHSH

...*PUMP HIM UP!*

--SEEMED ALL *PUMPED-UP* SOMEHOW, ALMOST LIKE A *HYPER-MUSCLE-FREAK*-- AND THERE WERE THESE, LIKE, *FEED-TUBES* IN THE BACK OF HIS *HELMET*...

INJECTING SOME KIND OF *CHEMICAL* DIRECTLY INTO HIS *BRAIN*?

YEAH, THAT'S THE *IMPRESSION* I GOT -- MAKING HIM A *VERY ANGRY DUDE*.

AND THIS BANE IS *MORE* THAN JUST A MONSTER -- HE'S *SHARP* TOO.

HE *KNEW* JEAN PAUL WASN'T YOU -- SAW RIGHT *THROUGH* HIM -- AND HE DOESN'T EVEN *KNOW* YOU THE WAY *GORDON* DOES.

I GOT THE SENSE HE WONDERED *WHY* IT WASN'T YOU -- AND HE MIGHT'VE EVEN FIGURED IT *OUT*.

FIGURED *WHAT* OUT?

WELL, THERE'S SOMETHING, YOU KNOW... *WRONG* WITH YOU.

NOTHING'S WRONG WITH ME -- AND NOW *YOU* CAN GO HOME TOO.

I'LL HANDLE THE RIDDLER ON MY OWN.

BUT--

ON MY OWN.

ALL RIGHT, ALL *RIGHT*... GHEESH.

KRAOOM

THE MINUTE I GET HIM *BACK*, HE'S *GONE*.

BUT FORGET *HOME*, MAYBE *ARIANA* WILL APPRECIATE MY COMPANY.

HARD TO FOCUS ON THE **RIDDLE** WHEN I KEEP THINKING ABOUT THE RIDDLER **HIMSELF**...

HE HASN'T MADE A MOVE ON ME SINCE HE TRIED TO SACRIFICE ME TO THE DEMON **BARBATHOS** -- BUT **WHY NOT?**

MAYBE IT'S TAKEN HIM THIS LONG TO **RECOVER** FROM THE EXPERIENCE -- OR MAYBE HE'S BEEN **CONFUSED** UNTIL RECENTLY, CONVINCED HE WAS STILL IN THE GRIP OF THE DEMON...

EITHER WAY, IT DOESN'T **MATTER.**

HE'S BACK, AND HE'S GOT TO BE **STOPPED**... EVEN THOUGH I'VE ALREADY CRUISED THE STREETS FOR **HOURS**, STILL WITH NO FIX ON THE **RIDDLE.**

WHAT CROWNS JUST **ONE** BUT BEATS A DOZ --

WAIT A MINUTE --!

THE CLOCK TOWER ATOP NUMBER ONE GOTHAM PLAZA --

STMP

--A BELFRY CROWNING CITY HALL--

VRAOW

SKREEEE

-- AND SET TO BLOW UP AT THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT!

ONE

BIM BAM BOOM, SOME PERCUSSION -- IN ONLY TEN MINUTES, AND STILL NO SIGN OF THE BATMAN...

WELL, HE'S HAD HIS CHANCE.

12

KLIK

TIME TO PRIME MY DEVICE AND QUIT THE BELFRY BEFORE--

FREEZE, RIDDLER!

Eh--? BATMAN--? THEN YOU DID SOLVE THE RIDDLE -- AND YOU'VE COME TO DISARM MY DEVICE?!

NOPE...

I'VE COME TO RIDDLE YOU.

TOK TOK TOK TOK TOK

AGHK!!

THTCH THTCH THTCH

A G-GUN--? YOU... YOU'RE NOT THE BAT-MAN! WH-WHO... WHO ARE YOU?

SANTA CLAUS.

M-MY... MY BODY...! WH-WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?! WHAT HAVE YOU D-DONE TO ME?!

CONSIDER IT A GIFT, RIDDLER... BUT USE IT WELL.

IT WON'T LAST MORE THAN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS...

...AND THEN YOU'RE NOTHING AGAIN.

BONGG

AHN

M-MID-NIGHT...

DEET

11

THE COUNTDOWN'S BEGUN...

BONGG

DEET

10

AND WHAT-EVER'S HAPPENED TO ME, I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF--

BONGG

GUHH--!

TOOK TOO LONG SOLVING THE RIDDLE.

KRATCH

DEET 09

PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME TO SPARE.

GOT TO LOCATE THE EXPLOSIVES AND--

I FELT NOTHING, BATMAN! YOU CAN'T *HURT* ME NOW!

HE'S NOT OUT?!

BONGG

UHN--!

SWOK

DEET 08

FASTER AND STRONGER THAN HE'S EVER BEEN -- WHAT'S *HAPPENED* TO HIM?

BONGG

DEET 07

WE DON'T HAVE *ALL NIGHT* FOR THIS! WE'RE ALREADY IN *COUNT-DOWN!*

HOLD STILL, IDIOT!

BONGG

CHUD

THE VIBRATION OF EACH GONG TICKS MY DETONATOR ONE STEP CLOSER TO DOOM!

HE'S MANIC -- AND "PUMPED UP," AS ROBIN PUT IT...

DEET 06

IS HE DRUGGED--?

AND, IF SO, IS THERE SOME CONNECTION TO THIS "BANE"?

SKUTCH

BONG

DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND?

DEET 05

ON THE LAST GONG AT THE STROKE OF MID-NIGHT--

BONGG

FRAK

THIS WHOLE BUILDING WILL GO BOOM--

HE'S MUCH STRONGER THAN USUAL.. OR I'M WEAKER... OR BOTH...

DEET 04

--AND WE'LL BE NOTHING BUT WET SPOTS IN THE RUBBLE!

BONGG

OUT OF MY WAY, YOU MORON!

WUMP

DEET 03

BONGG

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO **BLOW UP**, YOU CAN DO IT **SOLO!**

HE'S GETTING AWAY...

DEET 02

.. AND NO TIME TO **CHASE** HIM...

BONGG

PSHAK

...NOT IF HE TOLD THE **TRUTH.**

DEET 01

CHAK

ONLY **ONE** CHIME TO **GO** NOW...

.. AND I'VE GOT TO HOLD IT **BACK** -- PREVENT THE CLAPPER FROM STRIKING THE **BELL**...

01

...FREEZE THE COUNTDOWN...

BUT THE MECHANISM IS TOO **STRONG**. AND I'M STILL **WEAK**... STARTING TO **SLIP**...

CAN'T HOLD IT MUCH LONGER.. GOT TO SHIFT MY EFFORT TO -

FWT

SPRAKT

--THE DETONATOR!

Ahh--

DELAYED OR NOT...

BONGG

...MIDNIGHT IS INEVITABLE...

.. BUT NO EXPLOSION.

.. AND A DART OF SOME KIND --!

THE RIDDLER WAS DRUGGED.

AND IT'S A DRUG I KNOW ALL TOO WELL.

A DERIVATIVE OF VENOM, IN AN EVEN MORE CONCENTRATED FORM THAN WHEN I --

BRRIIINGG

HELLO? DOCTOR KINSOLVING -- YES, STILL TIRED... WEAK, BUT AT LEAST THE SEDATIVES GAVE ME SOME REST, ENOUGH FOR ME TO PARTIALLY FUNCTION..

WELL, YOU CAN'T EXPECT TO BE UP TO FULL SPEED AND EFFECTIVENESS RIGHT OFF THE BAT.

BY THE TIME YOUR PRESCRIPTION RUNS OUT, YOU SHOULD BE RESTED AND RECEPTIVE TO SOME HOLISTIC TREATMENT.

THANK YOU, DOCTOR KINSOLVING...

SHONDRA

RIGHT -- THANK YOU, SHONDRA. I APPRECIATE THE SPECIAL ATTENTION.

NOT AT ALL -- YOU'RE A GOOD MAN.

WHY... GOOD?

ONE EXAMPLE -- ADMITTEDLY BIASED -- YOU PAID EVERY PENNY OF MY MED SCHOOL COSTS -- A FULL SCHOLARSHIP -- AND YOU'VE YET TO EVEN MENTION IT.

I... I HONESTLY DIDN'T KNOW...

IT MAY BE *MY MONEY*, BUT *LUCIUS FOX* DECIDES HOW THE WAYNE FOUNDATION SHOULD--

THE SCHOLAR-SHIP PROGRAM *WASN'T* YOUR IDEA?!

AI

THE OVERALL IDEA, YES, BUT LUCIUS SCREENED THE INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS..

AND YOU DIDN'T KNOW *I* WAS ONE OF THEM?

NO...

THEN WHY *DID* YOU COME TO ME AS A PATIENT?

BECAUSE... I NEEDED *HELP*... AND YOU'RE THE *BEST*.

THEN YOU'RE AN EVEN *BETTER* MAN THAN I THOUGHT -- ONE WITH *SUPERB TASTE*.

NOW GET SOME *REST*, BRUCE... AND CALL ME IF YOU *NEED*.

REST...

*... NOW THAT I HAVE TO FACE A MAN -- **TWO** MEN EVENTUALLY -- FUELED BY THE SAME VENOM THAT TURNED ME INTO A MONSTER... NEARLY DESTROYED ME.*

I'LL NEED MORE OF IT THAN SHE KNOWS...

AND IN MY ARSENAL... SEDATIVES.

WHAT THE

YOURS JUST WENT CRAZY TOO?

ALL OF EM..?

G.C.P.D.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THIS LOUSY COMPUTER?

IT RISES ONLY WHERE IT'S LOW SIDE POISON CHAINING BOTTOM TO TOP IT WILL GO

IT RISES ONLY WHERE IT'S LOW SIDE POISON CHAINING BOTTOM TO TOP IT WILL GO

OUR WHOLE COMPUTER SYSTEM WIPED OUT? BY GIBBERISH?

"ANOTHER RIDDLE, I'M AFRAID..

..THIS TIME IN THE FORM OF A COMPUTER VIRUS.

TAKE US WEEKS TO GET THE POLICE DATA BASE BACK ON LINE.

"IT RISES WHERE IT'S LOW, SIDE POISON CHAINING BOTTOM TO TOP IT WILL GO."

THIS ONE'S ALMOST TOO EASY, GOR DON...

...AS IF THE VENOM'S ACTING ON HIS MIND AS WELL AS HIS BODY.

SO I GUESS WE JUST FOLLOW THE BATMAN, BANE.?

SEE HOW HE FARES AGAINST YOUR HYPED UP RIDDLER?

YOU GUESS WRONG, TROGG.

WE'VE ALREADY TESTED THE WEAKENED BATMAN, AND WE'VE ALREADY TESTED *ME*. NOW... IT'S *YOUR* TURN.

US--?

YOU HEARD THE MAN -- THIS RIDDLE IS *EASY*. SOLVE IT... AND YOU CAN SEND THE BATMAN A *MESSAGE*.

FAIL... AND MAYBE I'LL FIND *NEW* AIDES.

UH... SIDE POISON. POISON SIDE... *POSEIDON*?

YEAH-- SOMETHING TO DO WITH *WATER*..?

A WATER-SOLUBLE SACK AND -- *VOILÀ*! MY *HYPER-TOXINS* WILL BE CARRIED OUT WITH THE *TIDE*.

HIGH TIDE

?

SO MUCH FOR GOTHAM BAY'S *FISH POPULATION* AND EVERYTHING THAT *PREYS* ON THEM...

.. RIGHT UP THE *FOOD-CHAIN* TO THE UNSUSPECTING *HUMANS* OF GOTHAM.

AND TH S TIME I'M *OUT* OF HERE *LONG* BEFORE BATMAN CAN--

SHUMP

KLOOSH

AGAIN, BATMAN -?

SWAK

BUT I ALREADY TOLD YOU...

SIDE
HIGH TIDE

?

KUNCH

"I CAN'T BE HURT NOW!

MAYBE NOT, RIDDLER...

IT'S TRUE -- HE'S CRAZED, UTTERLY BEYOND PAIN.

WHOK

"...BUT YOU CAN BE STOPPED!

LIKE YOU CAN'T?!

FRAKT

?

NEVER -- NOT BY HIM...

CHUFT

..NOT BY ALL THE VENOM IN THIS DRUG-DIRTY WORLD.

HE BEAT US.

YEAH - BUT LET'S SEND THE MESSAGE ANYWAY.

THRKK

HEY, BATMAN!

THIS IS HOW YOU REALLY RIDDLE THE RIDDLER!

GET DOWN!

BRAKAKAKAKAKAK

TOO SLOW!

SPSHH

TOO SLOW TO SAVE THE RIDDLER...

... AND TOO SLOW TO STOP THE THREE WHO GUNNED HIM DOWN.

I'VE LOST MORE THAN JUST A STEP...

HARBOR SIDE HIGH TIDE

... BUT I HAVEN'T LOST IT ALL.

THIS IS THE BATMAN. I HAVE A MAN DOWN AND I NEED AN AMBULANCE FAST -- EMT -- AT THE HARBOR-SIDE HIGH TIDE MARKER.

WHERE THE TIDE RISES ONLY WHEN IT'S LOW.

YOU ALMOST BEAT HIM TO THE PUNCH, EVEN *WITHOUT* ME -- AND EVEN THOUGH HE SEEMS TO BE *RECOVERING* FROM WHATEVER WAS *WRONG*...

BUT THIS RIDDLER WAS STILL TOO *EASY*. WE NEED TO *TEST* HIM - WEAR HIM *DOWN* AGAIN - WITH MORE *FORMIDABLE* FORCES...

WE NEED *FRENZY*.

WE NEED *NAKED MADNESS ITSELF*.

IN WHICH CASE, I'M *WAY* AHEAD OF YOU, BANE...

...WE CRACK *THIS* SHELL, AND *BELIEVE* ME...

...THE *NUTS* FLY.

NEXT ISSUE > *BREAKOUT!*

BAT-SIGNALS

DC COMICS
1325 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019

JENETTE KAHN, President & Editor-in-Chief
DICK GIORDANO, VP-Editorial Director
DENNIS O'NEIL, Editor
SCOTT PETERSON, Assistant Editor
JIM CHADWICK, Director-Design Services
JOE ORLANDO, VP-Creative Director
PAUL LEVITZ, Executive VP & Publisher
BRUCE BRISTOW, VP-Sales & Marketing
PATRICK CALDON, VP & Controller
TERRI CUNNINGHAM, Managing Editor
CHANTAL D'AULNIS, VP-Business Affairs
LILLIAN LASERSON, VP-Legal Affairs
BOB ROZAKIS, Production Director

Dear Scott,

Glad to see the return of Black Mask! Keep those older Bat-foes coming! Doug did a decent job of keeping Black Mask's history intact. This looks like it'll be one heckuva story!

Funny how we should suddenly see Lucius Fox appear after years in comics limbo. Let's see more of him and the Wayne Foundation in upcoming issues!

Bob Elinskas
Utica, New York

Check out this month's DETECTIVE COMICS—issue #657, to be exact—for lots more of Lucius and the Wayne Foundation, with a generous helping of Robin and Azrael thrown in for good measure.

Dear Denny,

BATMAN #484 was a good read. I didn't think much of Black Mask the first time around, so I was pleasantly surprised to find him formidable this time. I think he knows full well Skullface is the Batman. Skullface's escape from the Batman was way too easy.

I enjoyed Tom's art this issue, but thought him better in CATWOMAN DEFIANT. I guess Jim Aparo needed a break. Don't blame him at all, but hope he returns soon. Jim does do the best Batman around.

It's great to see that, like several years before, all the creators work hard instead of riding a movie's coattails every month.

Getting fire insurance,
Keith Kimball
Tucson, Arizona

Movie? Television show, you mean...

Dear Bat-guys,

What the heck is this putrid filth somebody drew with a Crayola? I thought Jim Aparo was going to be drawing Batman. He might not be able to draw Robin really great, but he can draw the rest of the cast perfectly...not to mention that he is the all-time great Bat-artist. The art in this issue is horrible. I'll cite one example: every page. I'm not trying to be mean. I'm sure that these artists are better suited to different characters.

Robin IV
Saginaw, Michigan

Dear Denny,

Boy, this is really going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you. Honest! But, I'll do what I must...

Excuse me, but what is the deal with these "guest artists"? Sure, these new artists need exposure, but on a top title like BATMAN? I was always under the impression that you had to have made a name for yourself before being allowed on a top comic.

It's bad enough that I have to choke down another story about the Black Mask (whom I can't stand even a little), but the art is just *terrible*. And by the time we get to the last page it's even worse! Just look at Batman and Robin! Who are those two *fat* costumed heroes? Anyone we know and love?

Michelle E. Koller
Romeo, Michigan

*Elvis? Is that you? Where have you **been**? And who's that with you?*

Re: BATMAN #484

I liked the story, the suspense is there, Vicki's appearance and all, but **where's the beef?** The art was pathetic. Unless Tim put on about 75 pounds and had his head shrunk and Batman dyed his hair blond within the last month, I think it's time for somebody new. At least get an artist who keeps things proportionally correct, keeps hair colors constant and remembers Batman has a Bat-logo on his chest. Art 2, Story 6, Cover 4.

Brian Carpenter
President, Robin Fan Club
Webster, New York

Batman was still wearing his disguise, hence the blond hair.

Dear Denny,

I'll lay a pretty big bet that Jim Aparo was not the artist on issue #484. What a mistake! So anyway, I start reading. First impressions are that I don't much like the art. I read a bit further. Not too bad actually, I think. Suddenly, I'm in love. These guys are great! I don't recall seeing Grindberg and Scott in any other title, but what a find!

Robert Florence
102 Wallacewell Rd.
Balornock, Glasgow
Scotland

P.S. I need pen friends. I'm fifteen years old and also like Guy Gardner. Girls apply to address above. (Oh, yeah. Boys. Them too, I suppose.)

Tom is no stranger to the Batman, having drawn a DETECTIVE annual, as well as CATWOMAN DEFIANT and BRIDE OF THE DEMON. Trevor, meanwhile, is the regular inker on GREEN LANTERN. Tom and Trevor seemed to provoke some pretty severe reactions, one way or the other. To each his or her own, I suppose.

Dear Batfolks,

1) Does the waterproof acid stuff in issue #484 have anything to do with Joker's face?

2) Does the comic go along with the new cartoon or movies?

3) How old are Robin and Batman?

C. Brooks
New Kensington
Pennsylvania

P.S. Please put this in the comics so I have a reason to make my mom buy it for me!

Who needs a reason to buy BATMAN? 1) No. 2) THE BATMAN ADVENTURES goes along with the cartoon. None of the monthly comics go along with the movies, although there were adaptations of the films. 3) Robin is 14, and Batman refuses to divulge his exact age. Secretive little bat.

Dear Moench, Grindberg and Scott,

BATMAN #485 was one of the best stories I have read in years. The suspense started right away when Batman was on the inside of the Black Mask's hideout torn between attacking Black Mask and protecting the kidnapped Fox. The plot went smoothly without any hitches and the artwork was indeed something to behold. Through every page the realism and emotions of the people involved jumped out at the reader, giving him a true scope of the events that were about to take place. Batman and Robin both were portrayed as Guardians of the night in Gotham City. They both had a sinister look about them that told the reader they truly hated crime and would do anything to eradicate it from their city. The final climax was a bit of a shock because after Batman had beaten Black Mask's bodyguard he lost the Black Mask in the river below. The epilogue was first-rate as we see a typical scene of the Batman talking to Commissioner Gordon and discovering that the Black Mask was not Roman Sionis after all. The gang lord was still at large when the sinister face of Batman says, "I did fail." Top-notch, first-rate in every facet of the story.

Bernie Wimberly
Houston, Texas

Black Mask was indeed Roman Sionis, but the body found in the river wasn't.

Dear Scott,

Doug Moench is back and I, for one, am impressed. Despite his long absence, he can still handle the Batman as few writers can.

Batman is one of the most interesting characters in comics; however, this past year of single-issue stories has not allowed much room for character development. It appears Doug has realized this and is taking steps to change the situation. He keeps the confrontation between Batman and Black Mask as the centerpiece of the story without neglecting this title's rich supporting cast. Bruce's confrontation with Vicki last month and the scenes with Gordon this month are fine examples of this. I can only hope that Doug will continue this trend.

Max
Madison, Wisconsin

Dear Scott,

I enjoyed the second part of the Black Mask storyline in BATMAN #485 a good deal better than the first part from the previous issue.

Let's begin with the cover:

At first glance I thought it wasn't that interesting, but upon further examination I began to see its beauty! The way the artist (Michael Golden?) drew the Gotham buildings looming above the Black Mask was incredible.

As for the interior:

Tom Grindberg and Trevor Scott's artwork didn't do anything for me last issue, so I really can't explain why I thought it was so fantastic this time around! Anyway, I was blown away by their shadowy renditions of Batman, and I hope these guys will do some more Batman stuff in the future. My only artistic complaint is that Robin looked a bit too old in some panels.

Doug Moench's writing was great, of course, but I have a little problem believing that Commissioner Gordon would start to turn against Batman after all these years of trust. Although it might make an interesting storyline in coming issues, I'd rather not see it happen.

Mike Farmer
Alpharetta, Georgia

Dear Denny and Scott,

Doug Moench's "Faces of Death," BATMAN #485, was vintage Dark Knight.

There was a great deal to this story that took place just below the surface: the growing peer relationship between Batman and Robin, the doubt that Sarah is beginning to plant in the mind of James Gordon—doubt over the propriety of his dealing with a vigilante.

Tom Grindberg, Trevor Scott and Adrienne Roy provided an apt backdrop for a story fraught with uncertainties. Shadows and a fog-like mist seemed to pervade each and every panel.

This was a moody, finely crafted tale. A real treat.

Warmest regards,
Jan C. Childress
Brooklyn, New York

*The same could be said of your letter, Jan. It won't be, of course, but it **could** be.*

Cover lineup: sketch by Ed Hannigan, pencils by Travis Charest, inks by Ray McCarthy, colors by Bob Le Rose.

There's been a little change here in the Batcave, as Jordan B. Gorfinkel takes over as the new assistant editor on BATMAN and SHADOW OF THE BAT. He's a great writer, a great colorist, and a great guy (although his taste in officemates leaves a little something to be desired), so make him feel nice and welcome. I can't tell you how much I've enjoyed handling the lettercols this past year, not to mention how cool it is to work with guys as incredibly talented as Doug and Jim. Meanwhile, I'll still be seeing you over in 'TEC and THE BATMAN ADVENTURES. Now for those pesky next-issue boxes...

OVER IN ROBIN: It's the last issue! Go pick it up! ROBIN III: CRY OF THE HUNTRESS #6, by Chuck Dixon, Tom Lyle and Bob Smith.

OVER IN SHADOW: What do a labyrinthine castle outside of Gotham and a long-ago medical case involving Dr. Thomas Wayne have in common? Find out when the shadow of the Bat falls on "The Mad Thane of Gotham," in SHADOW OF THE BAT #10, by Alan Grant, Mike Collins and Steve Mitchell.

OVER IN DETECTIVE: Under the brilliant direction of the General, the Wardogs are just inches away from capturing a major Gotham police precinct. Can the Batman possibly help when he's so exhausted he can barely stand? DETECTIVE COMICS #656, by Chuck Dixon, Scott Hanna and guest artist Tom Mandrake.

NEXT ISSUE: Bane's tired of fooling around. He's going to give Batman a real test...by breaking every inmate out of Arkham. BATMAN #491, by Doug Moench and Jim Aparo.

—Scott Peterson
now I must head home
and never...